

A
REVIEW
OF THE
STATE
OF THE
BRITISH NATION.

Saturday, November 20. 1708.

MY Mad Man run a Story very high in our last, about *English* Noblemen being General Officers, and desires me to explain him a little to Day; whether I shall mend the Matter or no, I know not; for Truth will be Truth, tho' it be open'd and explain'd a hundred Times a Day——I see but two Things need Explanation, nor would they need it, if this Age were accustomed to see with their Eyes, or hear with their Ears, or judge with their Understandings.

1. It is not suggested, that there are no *English* Noblemen that can sacrifice their Pleasures, and adjourn their soft luxuriant Way of Living, and serve

their Country——And yet I have said this, I think, the Number is so few, I need not name them.

2. Nor is every Nobleman that stays at home, useless to, or out of the Service of his Country.
3. Nor has our mad Man's Observation of the Siege of *Lisle* any Respect to or View of the Behaviour of those that are in the Service; if there are any, who having Commissions to serve abroad, are without just Excuse staying at home, let such answer for themselves; I may take some Freedoms with their Lordships hereafter upon that Head, but at present what has been said looks quite another Way.

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It is certain, and I believe, I need make no Apology for saying it, that of all the Nations now at War, *England* has the fewest of her Nobility and Gentry in the Field, I mean compared to the great Number of Gentlemen we have in this Nation; and if I make some Enquiry into the Reasons of it, tho' it may pinch a little, I cannot but think it necessary to be done on several Accounts.

The only Reason, I have found given for it, is the Riches of our Gentry—— This has effeminated the Spirits of our Nation, and taken off the very Edge of our Genius, either from Arms or Learning. A P——x of this *Greek and Latin*, said an eminent Gentleman, that I had the Honour to know, they serve to make good Priests, but signify nothing to a Gentleman; a Man of Quality ought to speak none of them, it makes him so dull, so stiff, and so formal—— The Education of a Gentleman is above the Mechanism of Sciences, he learns the Language of the Field, that's becoming and looks well; any Man may know a true-bred Gentleman, he always talks Dog-Language, understands a Horse, and loves the light Saddle—— Well, but *Sir Thomas*, what think you of the War? Does not a Regiment become a Gentleman, and is not the Language of the Camp a good Note of a Gentleman?—— Not at all, says the Sports-Man, if you distinguish right, it may do well enough for younger Brothers, and Men of no Fortune; the old Song is their Motto, *What cares he to dye, that can't tell how to live*: But what Business has a Gentleman of Quality and Estate to go into the Field? No, no, your humble Servant; We pay others to fight, there's no Occasion for us to go our selves; they go to get Estates, Ours are got already; Soldiers fight, and Schollars read, and Parsons preach, 'tis all for Money; now what have we to do to get Money? Ours is got to our Hand, all our Business is to spend our Money, hunt, race, game, drink, &c. We do not seek the World, we have it; others pursue, but we enjoy; what have we to do to do to read or fight?—— It is none of our Business.

Well, but *Sir Thomas*, you did go to the Army, and made a Campaign, and all the World knows you are brave enough; why should you leave it?—— Ay, says the Knight, that was when I was a younger Brother—— But as soon as the Estate fell, your Servant said I, *Goodman General*, I fac'd to the right about, and bid Good b' w' ye to Guns and Swords, let them fight that have Nothing to live on—— Then for that Foppery they call Courage, to have a Man's Head knock'd off to be called *Brave*; for my part I believe, I have as much Courage as a Man of two Thousand a Year ought to have; but I have no Occasion to be buried in the *Ditch of Honour*; all the World seeks Ease, Quiet and Pleasure, and I have it; what Business have I with these sham Improvements, my Business is done?

This is the true Language of our Gentry and this is the true Reason, why you have few Noblemen in the Wars, and of Inferior Gentlemen very very few that could live without it.

This is quite contrary to the general Practice of the rest of *Europe*; the *French* have carry'd on all the great Things they have done in the World by the Number of their Gentry, who universally put themselves in Arms, and no Greatness of Birth or Estate excuses them; who are they that manage the Armies of *France*, who supply their Infantry with double the Number of Officers, who compose their numerous Cavalry; it is all their Gentry, the eldest Sons of their Nobility, and indeed all their Sons are bred to Arms, and it would be a Scandal to a Gentleman in *France* not to have made his Campaign in the Armies of the King; nor is this the Effect of the Power and Tyranny of the present King; let any Man look back to the Civil Wars of *France*, in the Time of *Henry IV.* they will find him frequently in the Field with a Body of 6000 to 8000 Horse, all Gentlemen serving at their own Charge, or at the Charge of such of the Nobility as brought them in. Let any Man look into *Scotland* at this Time, and in former Times yet more, How many Noblemen of that Nation have we now in the

the Army, who at the same time want no Estates to live on at Home, such as the Duke of *Argyle*, E. of *Orkney*, E. of *Stair*, Marquis of *Louthain*, E. of *Leven*, E. of *Portmore*, and others, that if I mistake not, you have fifteen Noblemen, and twenty three Noblemen's Sons of that Kingdom now in the Field; nor are there many Noblemen in that Kingdom, but what have been bred in the Armies.

And let no Man wonder, why the *Scots* Nobility and Gentry obtain so much Reputation abroad, at the same time that we endeavour to put so much Contempt upon them at home. The Reason is plain, they have the true liberal Education of a Gentleman, they are bred to Letters first, and then to Arms; the first teaches them to behave, inspires them with generous Principles, and true Notions of Honour, the last gives them Opportunity to show it, and makes them terrible in the World; they are first made Men of Sence, Men of Letters, and then Men of Arms; and this I take to be the true Reason, why there are so few *Scots* Cowards in the World, since 'tis hardly possible for a Man of Sence to be a Coward— And why have we so many People misbehave in the World, Especially at Sea? The Case is plain, they are bred *Boors*, empty and swinish Sots and Fops, and they are not capable of having a right Sence of Honour in the World— Nor need we go farther to illustrate this, but to those of our own Gentlemen, who by great, good Fortune had Parents of more Sence, and that bestow'd Learning upon them; let any Man but view the Difference of such when they come abroad, and how they then make the finest Gentlemen in the World.

But such is our general Disaster, that these generally were bred younger Brothers— And the best bred Gentlemen now in *England*, I mean of Quality and Fortunes, are such as were bred so— Is my Lord, or is the Baronet, a Man of Letters, a Man of Reading and Study?— You need do no more than search, I warrant, he was bred a younger Brother; the most Famous Men we have had, Sir *Kennel Digby*, Mr. *Byl*, the present Earl of

Pemb—, and a Crowd I could name; almost all your Men of Value in *England* were younger Brothers; the Heir's an Ass by Birth, and must remain so to entail the Family, and continue the Race; it's below the Dignity of the Family to have the eldest Son have any Education; get him a Tutor to carry him about to the Taverns, and cover his Lewdness; but as for Sciences he is Pupil to the Groom, and takes his Lessons from his Father's Huntsmen. And this is the Reason why a Man may venture to say, there perhaps never was a *H...* of *C...*s in *England*— TILL NOW, where there has not been a hundred Men could hardly spell their own Names, and some that could not write them; and since 'tis better now— It is better— And that is as much as I will say to it.

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